

THE  
REGULATION  
OF  
DIVERSIONS;

Designed principally for the  
BENEFIT of YOUNG PERSONS.

Printed in the YEAR 1708.

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By HENRY GROVE.

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THE SECOND EDITION.

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L O N D O N.

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R E G U L A T I O N  
O F  
D I V E R S I O N S.

**T**HE forming *Young People* to a solid and serious temper hath been always accounted a matter of the last importance both to themselves, and the publick, in regard Nature generally keeps the Ply that is first given it, and a wild undisciplined Youth is seldom known to make a *religious* and *useful* man. The disorders committed in the first stage of life are much like a gross mistake in our way at first setting out upon a journey, which carries us so much wider of our end, and is consequently the more difficult to be retrieved.

On this account, I should think, whoever offers *Young Persons* to be their Guide, provided he give security he will not mislead them, may reasonably expect a welcome: their inclinations and desires are warm and impetuous, and, like their blood, on which they very much depend, quickly inflamed; the world they live

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in is full of objects fited to ferment and set them on fire; in short, all things within and without, (if care be not taken) conspire to ruin and betray them; the heat of their imagination hurries them on, and will not suffer them to make a stand, that they may coolly consider their danger, and enter into all the reflections necessary to the exactness of their conduct: for which reason it is requisite that Rules and Measures of Acting be formed to their hands, and that they be very particular; these they may have the leisure to read, and the review will cost them no great trouble; but to draw them out in order for themselves, (no one assisting them) if it be not beyond their capacity, would too much fatigue and vex their patience. Upon such Views as these it is that I composed the following *Essay*, which, I can be witness, was honestly designed, and, should the success be but answerable to the goodness of the intention, it will be no little satisfaction.

It is easy to observe there are certain Passions and Qualities belonging to every age, and which form its peculiar character. *Covetousness* is the vice of *Old-Men*; an *immoderate* and *unwearied concern* to raise their fortunes and greaten their families is a common fault of the *Middle-Aged*; and the *Younger Sort* are distinguished chiefly by their violent love of Pleasure, of sensual worldly Pleasure. Pleasure is indeed the idol of the *Young*, to which all things else are sacrificed; it is made a kind of business, they devote themselves intirely to it, and live as if they had nothing to do but gratify a vain extravagant humour. They are apt to think themselves a sort of priviledged persons whom the prohibition of pleasure does not reach;  
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imagine the vigour and gaiety of their age, the strength of their inclinations, and the quick relish they have of pleasure, are so many *Probabilities* they were made on purpose for it, and will bear them out in all the liberties they take.

Now, I acknowledge, Pleasure does much better become the vivacity of Youth than the languour and gravity of Age; and that degree of Pleasure a *Young Man* might innocently enough enjoy, an *Old Man* could not give himself to without a breach of Decency. But let not the *Young* therefore fancy they have a toleration to go what length they please; if *Youth* be not forbid the enjoyment of Pleasure, yet in this enjoyment it is to keep within the bounds of *Religion* and *Virtue*. It is an ill character in any one, (be his age what it will,) to be a *Lover of Pleasure more than a Lover of GOD*.

The Pleasures of Sense are of *two* kinds; some are in themselves unlawful, and absolutely forbidden us, as *Fornication, Uncleanneſs, &c.* Here we do not say the *Desire* is to be tempered and moderated, but quite suppressed; nothing less will suffice.

The Pleasures of this sort are so gross and defiling, so opposite to the design of Christianity, to that purity of heart it requires from all who profess it; and tend so directly to undermine the Principles of Natural Religion, that the Reason and Understanding of Young People themselves, as inconsiderate as they are, blush at them; and if at any time they make bold with them it is not that they are ignorant of the guilt and pollution that cleave to such carnal gratifications. I shall therefore pass over the Pleasures of this kind, as carrying their own condemnation with

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them, and proceed to consider the *second* sort of Pleasures that are in themselves, and abstracting from the abuses made of them, lawful and allowed, and which therefore within certain Restrictions and Limitations may be lawfully desired.

The danger here is the greater, because not being apprehensive of it, we grow careless and secure. The object is, in general, harmless and inoffensive, and that satisfies us; not reflecting that the desire of an *innocent object* may be culpable through its excess of some other irregularity attending it.

Amongst the particulars of this sort of Pleasure I shall confine myself at present to the head of *Diversions*, because a Subject the least worn of any.

With these Young Persons are generally in love with to the height of *Fondness*; which as it is an extreme on the one hand, so it would not be a less on the other to lay them under an absolute restraint as to these things; for neither does *Religion* require this, nor will the present State of *Human Nature* bear it, which soon breaks if always kept at full bent.

By *Diversions* here I mean a sort of medium between Sloth and Business; actions that take us off from the main occupations of life, and are not, in themselves considered, of any use, but only as they prepare for others. Now it is possible to err by giving either too much or too little; and both are alike prejudicial; a faculty, never used grows rusty, and when continually in use wears out. So that it is really no advantage to our general or particular Calling to be engaged in it without interruption; we tire under

der our burthen, and dispatch but a little way in a great deal of time; whereas, a seasonable *Diversion* would give us fresh heart, and be like oiling the wheels, which makes them move the more pleasantly, and with the greater speed: besides all which, it escapes no one, that when a person is tied down to a thing and cannot have a loose from it now and then; it tends to disgust him against it.

*Religion* itself, however lovely and amiable it be, will look frightful and terrible to a Young Person that is obliged to be always poring on it; and the Duties of it (which, when performed by the soul in a devout and animated temper, affords so much pleasure) will become extremely irksome and tedious, if they return too often, or be drawn out too long. *Diversions* therefore are necessary for Youth, (and I fear in some degree for more staid Persons) but the misery is, they never say it is enough; they should be allowed to manage their Recreations after their own way did they know how to observe a measure; but generally when left to their own discretion they exercise no conscience in the matter. Give me leave therefore to prescribe you some *Prudential Rules* for the better *Regulation* of your *Diversions*. Of these some regard the *Choice* of your *Diversions*, and the *Circumstances* directly relating to them; others more immediately concern the *desire*; and others the actual *Use* and *Enjoyment*.

As for the *Choice* of your *Diversions*.

I. Be sure they be such as are allowable. Learn to divert thyself without offence to thy own, or the conscience of thy neighbour. Let not that good old Maxim be forgotten, *In matters of a disputable nature the safer side is to be chosen.*

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*sen.* It is doubted whether or no thou can'st lawfully play at a certain Game, but no one doubts but thou mayest lawfully let it alone; in Prudence therefore forbear, for why shouldest thou play away thy soul, a thing too precious to be staked against the monarchy of the world. *Diversions* enough are to be found unquestionably innocent, and what folly is it then to venture on such as will admit of an objection? And it is the opinion of very good Divines, that all Games of *chance* are of this number.

Monsieur *Fleury* thinks *Play* was absolutely unknown to the *Jews*, seeing we do not find the name once mentioned in Scripture; and even to this day the *Arabians* and other Eastern People play not at Games of Hazard, at least not by the allowance of their \* Law. This is certain, they are more liable to abuse than others, and offer more opportunities and temptations to cheat. When a person that is a kind of Professor in Gaming shall play with all the skill he is master of, and meer *chance* shall give the Game to another who hath little insight into the matter, it is a strong provocation to recover the Game by some knavish trick. Old Players fancy that they have a sort of right to win, and if it may not be done by fair means, they will do it by foul.

You will say if others abuse a thing, that is no reason why I should be denied the use of it; I have played, and found it no such snare to me. But let me ask thee, what has been thy security? Hath it not been restraining *Grace*? If so, have a care thou do not trespass too far. But let it be supposed there is no more danger to thee from one than from another *Diversion*,

\* *Mœurs des Israelites* pt. 2. c. 13.



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*version*, yet by thy Example thou dost encourage others that will prove too weak for the temptation ; and is it imaginable thou canst knowingly occasion sin in another, meerly because thou wilt not abstain from an unnecessary action, and be altogether blameless ? Yet more, it is to be considered that, in judging of the *Lawfulness* of a *Diversion*, I ought not to be concluded by my single opinion, contrary to the sense of other pious and good people. Though my *Judgment* is not to be determined by theirs, but by the evidence of the thing, yet I humbly conceive, it is but fit their *Judgment* should have some influence on my *Practice*. Charity obliges me to show so much regard to the peace of a fellow-christian not to grieve him by doing an action he thinks displeasing to God, and which might be as well omitted.

And then, I would propose it to your further thoughts whether it be not a Duty to stand more upon our reputation than to part with any portion of it for the sake of a *Diversion* ; and whether we ought not to value more the esteem of good christians than to forfeit it rather than forego a particular way of recreating ourselves ? We must be all aware that with whomsoever an ill opinion of us prevails, by alienating their minds from our persons it will disable us for doing any great good to them. And think again whether it can be justifiable for a man, out of an unreasonable bigotry to any Play, to cut himself off from a Part of his usefulness in the world ? With all this remember St. Paul's Exhortation, *Phil. iv. 8.* where among other marks and characters of those things that he commends to our practice, this is one, *that they*

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*they be of good report*; though I *deferr* not so much to *Opinion* and *Custom* as to think they can alter the intrinsic nature of actions, so that virtue shall become vice, or vice virtue, (as the incautious expressions of some men would almost tempt one to believe they did) yet I can not forbear being of the mind, that an action in its self *indifferent* may become by accident *sinful*, when stamped with an ill name by general suffrage, or by a number of conscientious christians.

There is one thing more which, though hinted at before, deserves to be a more particular subject of your thoughts. Though a *Diversion* be in its self undoubtedly lawful, and moreover be not scrupled by any one, yet is not this alone sufficient to warrant me in the use of it, unless it be such too as I can use with safety. There is a great variety in the *Temper*s of men, and this makes that a *Temptation* to one which is not so to another. Now if upon examination I find that this or that *Diversion* hath more than once drawn me into sin, hath ingaged my passions too far, or otherwise insnared me, it is to me *forbidden fruit*. I pray that God would not lead me into *Temptation*, and can I then allowably run myself into it?

II. In your *Choice* of *Diversions* prefer those that will best answer their end. This, I doubt, is but little minded by the most, who take the *Diversions* that are next at hand, or which the company vote for, or to which they are led by pure humour, nay often which meer *chance* has thrown them upon. Not a thought is laid out this way, though there be room for the exercise of Reason in this as well as in cases of greater moment. I own that as trifling

ling in things serious is a fault, so to be serious in trifles is a folly, whereupon you may suspect it would be downright jesting with your Reason to imploy it in stating the Nature and Differences of *Diversions*: but how much soever this may look like trifling, it may sometimes happen to have very serious consequences, and, by not consulting your own Temper, nor the Quality of the Remedy, it is not only possible to miss of the end that every reasonable man ought to design in his *Diversions*, but to turn them into instruments of mischief.

The general end of *Diversions* is by invigorating nature, and providing her with fresh recruits of spirit, to fit her for better and more chearful service; from whence it follows that all too violent and intense Exercises that exhaust the spirits, overstrain our powers, and crack the sinews of the constitution, are heedfully to be shuned. The particular and immediate End is, either to relieve the mind under *Melancholy*, and then some *Diversions* that will amuse the thoughts at the same time that it imployes the body is best; or to cure it of a fit of dulness, and then bodily exercise prudently managed will be of use, leaving the thoughts to rest themselves; I mean, as to any vigorous and close application; or lastly, the end proposed is the health and vigour of the animal part; and in this case likewise a gentle and agreeable motion is most proper: but your own *Prudence* will easily direct you here; I just mention these things to convince you that *Discretion* is to be used, that a thoughtless and promiscuous choice of *Recreations*, without making any distinction between them is highly absurd.

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You will all grant me it is not *Indifferent* what are the Ends we propose in our *Diversions*, for being rational creatures we are to have some rational aim in all our actions, not excepting those of the lowest rank; and if Reason is to sway us in the choice of our End, it would be nonsense to lay it aside in the choice of the Means. A man makes himself less ridiculous by levelling at a mean contemptable end, than by fixing on an important and good design, and pursuing it by means which he spends not one moment to consider whether they are adapted or not adapted to their end.

These Two Rules may suffice for the *Choice* of your *Diversions* themselves. The *Circumstances* relating to them are next to be considered, namely, *Time, Place* and *Company*.

I. Let your *Diversions* be well-timed. Do not think of diverting yourselves when there is no need for it, and more serious affairs demand your application. Remember *Recreations* are to get you new strength, not to consume that you have already. *To every thing* (saith the Wileman) *there is a season; and a time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance*; and not a little depends upon a nice observation of these times. Some seasons require respite, the spirits are extremely dull and flaggy, or employed by nature in her *Mechanical Operations*; and he that at such times shall call them off, and put them on close study and thinking is not only an ill husband of his health, but an ill manager of business; for, let his art be what it will, he must expect to make but sorry musick when the instrument is out of tune. On the contrary, when all is spritely and serene within,  
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and soul and body both are in good humour, let us lay hold of the opportunity, and as the *Proverb* directs, *Make hay while the Sun shines*. We are now capable of doing things with ease and dispatch, and it will be greatly to misplace our activity to bestow it wholly on our Play; we should rather look on it as an invitation from Providence to mind our work, and ought accordingly to improve it to this end. This holds in a more special manner with those who seldom know a clear sky; let such double their diligence when Nature smiles, and make their advantage of the kind fit.

2. Let the *Place* you chuse for your *Diversions* be unexceptionable. You are not ignorant that the Law bars you from *Publick-Houses*; and what is it better than a contempt of the *National Authority*, to frequent them notwithstanding? There is not, it is true, that care taken in the execution of the Law as might be wished, yet the *obligation* to obedience is still the same. If the Ministers of the Law neglect to discharge their duty, the Law does not thereupon lose its binding force which it derived from a higher fountain, for we are to be in subjection *not only for wrath, but conscience sake*. Let it not be pleaded that you are not within the *design* of the *Statute*, which was purely to prevent the idleness of labouring People, that they might not spend their time and money at the *Ale-House*, when the necessities of their families called for it; for granting this to have been the main *intent* of the Law, yet, foreseeing this end could not otherwise be effected, our Legislators have wisely made this Prohibition general, so that it is expected from you that you carefully

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fly such forbidden Ground, if not for your own sakes, for the sake of your poor neighbour. And this reason, on which the Law is founded, would make a distinction of *Places*, though we should suppose the Law to have left them *indifferent*. The ill consequences of your haunting Houses of ill *fame* are notorious; many of the poorer Idlers will take countenance from your example, and escape unpunished. The *Rank* and *Condition* you hold will fright the Officers from meddling with you; and, that they may not be thought partial, they will leave other offenders to go unmolested, and thus more families than one shall come to want bread by your means; besides which there is personal danger in the case, liquor must be called for, and when brought will, no doubt, be disposed of the common way, till at last you are got within a just suspicion of having drank more than is sufficient. I may add, that first or last, you run the hazard of falling into bad Company, of which there is seldom a scarcity at such places - - - and this minds me of the third thing.

3. Take heed with whom you divert yourselves, for it is of more consequence than you are aware who the Persons are you make your Partners. Avoid those that are given to *Passion*, *For an angry man stireth up strife*, *Prov.* xxix. 22. It is odds but he will find an occasion to quarrel before you part, and then farewell to all the pleasure and harmony of the conversation: so that the love of Pleasure, which Youth is so much governed by, should teach caution here. But the worst is, by herding with Persons of this character, a man takes to their ill Qualities, as it is natural for one flame to be kindled

kindled at another, and brawls and scuffles become so familiar that he insensibly slides into them when in more civil company. Let me further press this advice by the authority of *Solomon*, *Prov. xxii. 24, 25. Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go*; and the reason he adds is the same with that I just now mentioned, *viz. Lest thou learn his way, and get a snare to thy soul*. Neither let a man of *Corrupt Morals* share thy *Recreations*, be his Temper the best in the world; nay, for this very reason shun him the more carefully. The *smoothness* of his Behaviour; and his *sweet insinuating Humour* will but make the poison of his example go down the more glibly. May this persuade thee to be upon thy guard, and wisely consider thy danger. An accidental meeting at a *Diversion* hath sometimes been the foundation of a lasting acquaintance; a natural goodness of Temper often fatally recommends a wicked man, and from an indearedness for his Person we easily pass to a likeing of his Vices. And will it be any mitigation of my misery, should I perish by this means, that a *good tempered Man* was the instrument of my ruin?---So much for the *Choice* of your *Diversions*, and the *Circumstances* relating to them.

I come now to the *Second Thing* proposed, to give you those *Directions* that more immediately concern the *Desire*.

1. Let your *Desires* be cool and temperate for thus only can they be regular. The several degrees of *Desire* should be always matched by equal degrees of worth and significancy in the object; and where that is something of a low concern, it is a shame if it kindle a raging passion.

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Would not a man betray a childish folly that should be eagerly bent upon hunting down a *Butter-Fly*? The meanness of his spirit is not much less, that is earnest and impatient for some little *Diversion*. Let us take up that wise resolution of *St. Paul* not to be brought under the power of any.

Is it fit, Sirs, I should govern my *Desires* or that my *Desires* should govern me? You will say, that I should govern my *Desires*; for being mine, my right and property, I may justly exercise that dominion Nature hath given me over them. Well, Let me ask you again, is it fit *Reason* should govern *Desire*, or *Desire* govern *Reason*? This question, which you may think harder to be solved than the former, is in effect the very same; for it is *Reason* makes the man, and if a man rule his *Desires* it must be by the mediation of his *Reason*. Wherefore, if the *Desires* of things of an inferior nature be restless and vehement, not being in subjection to *Reason* they are no longer in their natural state, they are undue and exorbitant. And then to make you yet more cautious how you suffer such *Desires* to take head, consider as they get strength *Reason* loses it; and they are always most craving where there is the greatest impotence or disorder of the understanding, as in *Children* and *Mad-Folks*. But if hasty and inordinate *Desires* of *Diversions*, and such like trifles, argue a weakness of *Reason*, they show yet more plainly a defect of *Religion*. A soul full of the spirit of Christianity hath a sort of indifference for all that is in the world, and though it needs the use of these things sometimes, yet it is not glued to them; whereas he whose *Desires* towards any thing here below are loud and importunate, is tied fast to it, and consequently



quently hangs the looser from God. When the strength and spirits of the mind are wasted on other matters, nothing but indifference and lukewarmness are left for objects of a religious concern; as you may observe those Trees that run out into abundance of grosser shoots seldom bear much fruit, because all the best juices go to maintain those useless luxuriances.

You need not be informed when your *Desire* of *Diversions* is intemperate; if it push you forward to a too frequent injoyment of them--if you are continually in quest of new ones--if more pressing affairs are ordinarily made to stoop when they lie in the way of your *Diversions*--if having resolved upon a *Diversion*, and the weather or some accident prevent you, you are peevish and out of humour, vexed with the occasion that detains you, or sullenly idle away your time rather than you will apply yourselves to business--if these are the effects of your *Desires*, they are so very bad that you may well conclude the cause not to be very good.

2. Be not very desirous of *excelling* in any Game or Exercise; for besides that this shows a mean taste, and a wrong judgment of things, as if skill and mastery at the plays and occupations of Children (for in truth all the pretty methods we take to please and flatter human life are no better; as if, I say, these little things) were greatly to be coveted; besides that it diverts us from aiming at that *Wisdom which is from above*, and the heavenly skill of glorifying God, and managing our high Calling to the noblest purposes; besides all these disadvantages attending it, it hath likewise these unhappy consequences, that it engages us oftener than is decent in the favourite *Diversion*; untill

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we have attained the dexterity and the knowledge we desire, it fills us with vexation if after all we do not succeed at it, and will be a temptation, should we master it, to follow it too close, and spend too much of our time at it, either that we may make a penny of our Art, or out of silly vanity to let others see our extraordinary Talent at it.

I proceed now in the *Third Place* to lay before you such *Rules* and *Directions* as regard the *Use* and *Enjoyment* of your *Diversions*.

1. Beg of God that he would preside over your *Diversions*; that he would fortify you by his *Grace* against the *Temptations* that may assault you; teach you *moderation* in the use of them, and the wise art of making them subservient to Religion; in a word, that he would add his  *blessing* to them for the enlivening and refreshing your spirits. I would not be thought to mean that such a formal Address ought immediately to precede every *Diversi-  
on*, though I see no harm in it if it did; but what I mean is, that in your private Prayers among other Petitions you would not omit to mention sometimes the *Regulation of your Diversions*, that as they are innocent in their nature, they may also prove innocent in their use. And there is no doubt but you will do this, if duely sensible of the need you stand in of the divine Presence, that the most harmless Food may kill where he does not mercifully prevent; or, plainly that we cannot be concerned about the world, though in the most simple and unforbidden instances, with absolute safety: there is nothing but the Devil may mingle his temptations with, and, when we dream of no danger near, convey Poison into our cup of pleasure; which should be a reason with us to beg of God to direct and restrain us, to  
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hedge round our way, and enable us to recreate ourselves with innocence and safety.

2. Bless God your Circumstances in the world are such as to allow of needful and moderate *Diversions*; I say those that are *needful*; for really to be in a condition that would lay us under a temptation to pass away the whole of life in one enchanted circle or continued variation of them, is what no one would desire that knows what makes for his true interest; as, on the other side, it is not the most happy state of life to be confined to a perpetual drudgery of business, just to supply the necessities of Nature. If there be not an opportunity to unbend and relax by intervals, and taste the sweets of life, we find in ourselves a strong inclination to repine, and are the more apt to exceed bounds whenever we enjoy a vacancy. We have therefore great reason to be thankful if *Agur's* wife *Choice* be our Lot, not to have either *Poverty* or *Riches*. Our Religion is no enemy to convenient Recreations; and if herein our condition agree with our Religion, and will admit of them too, it is indeed a mercy. While we cheer and exhilarate ourselves, and the springs of life have a new force and briskness put into them, and our secret powers are disposed to act with greater pleasure, let not the goodness of our most bountiful Creator be unminded, who permits us to relieve our weariness, and supplies us with the means and capacities of doing it, and is pleased to see us lightened and animated by our Recreations, provided we do not transgress the inviolable Rules of Virtue and Sobriety.

3. In case you play for *Money*, let the Sum be inconsiderable, and no more than you would con-

contentedly lose. Where the stakes run high, it is no longer a *Diversion*, a calm and pleasing amusement, but endangers your repose. The whole soul is in an uneasy suspense while the Game is depending, the Thoughts variously agitated, and Hope and Fear by turns possess you; and thus what was designed to invigorate, tires and torments you, and dispirits you to a greater degree than Business itself would have done. Should you lose, not to mention the vexation it will give you, you will scarce be able to forbear playing on to retrieve your *Loss*; though instead of that it often happens that you throw more after. Should you win, it only serves to draw you in further, makes you willing to double the stake; and lured with the flattering hope of bettering your *good Luck*, as you call it, lose perhaps twice the Sum you had gotten. In short, win or lose, the inconvenience is much the same, and either way you become addicted to gameing; and to this cause I make no doubt, we ought to ascribe that vehement Passion for Play that we see in certain Persons, who are never satisfied any longer than while they are at it, nor indeed then. They play the oftener because they play for *Money*, and by often playing they contract an habitual inclination that is continually importuning them. It cannot pass for an excuse, *that you have Money to spare*; for it is a mistake to think you have so very much to spare for idle *Diversions*. Say you can spare what you play for at first, you are induced at long run to play for more than you can spare. Hast thou bread and to spare? Be thankful to God for this overplus, and shew thine is real charity by feeding his Poor. Does thy Cup overflow? It is pity any thing should be wasted when there  
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are so many would be glad of it to allay their Thirst. It is a dangerous error, though but too common, that what is more than enough to supply our needs, and the needs of those Nature has obliged us to provide for, is perfectly at our own disposal, and may be lavished away at discretion; whereas indeed we are no more than God's *Treasurers*, and must account for all that we receive; our superfluous wealth is part of the Publick Stock, and we are guilty of great mismanagement to embezel it, and lay it out on our private occasions; I would not say, when there is occasion.

4. Be very spareing of your *Diversions*. Though I said, not long since, that there are some occasions proper to relax in, you must not presently fancy that whenever you feel a reluctance to work, and the mind is a little wandering and dissipated, you have a sufficient pretence to seek your cure in some *Diversion*; for this backwardness does often arise not from your being unfit but unaccustomed to labour; and with a little trouble your thoughts might be recollected, and after you were once set in the work would proceed succesfully enough. Besides the barely changing our Business, might be made many times to supply the Place of *Diversion*, and the mind weary and sick of one Set of thoughts would find its repose in another; the secret of this is, that it cannot bear to be long in company with the same object; you must feed it with variety if you would keep it from languishing. In this it resembles the eye that loves not to gaze for any long while together upon the most beautiful picture, without once looking off; it is the liberty to vary its objects that gratifies it most. I believe there is scarce a *Student* but can tell us from

from his own experience, that after having meditated himself into a dozy heartless frame, the reading a delightful Piece of *History* hath awakened him, and put him into a new vein for Contemplation.

Real occasions for *Diversions* then are not so frequent as you are willing to believe, and consequently your *Diversions* ought not to be many and thick sown. The multitude of *Diversions* is extremely prejudicial, and the symptom of a vain and sensual disposition. In a life full of these airy Pleasures what room is there for the mortification and self denial of a Christian? A too quick succession of them sensualizes the heart, and unites it too strongly to the world, it makes you over fond of life, and afraid of death; it weakens the influence of heavenly things; for how can it be that our aspirations to the joys above should be very ardent at the time we are so intirely possessed of worldly delights? It emasculates the spirits; so softens the mind that it sinks under adversity; it is by voluntary austerities a man hardens himself against the day of trouble, and is able to bear up against those shocks of Providence from which no one is secure: whereas *Diversions* too often repeated unbrace the nerves of the Soul, and enfeeble its powers; and finally render us averse to the severer exercises of Religion and Virtue. These are all natural consequences of a life abandoned to Sports and Pastimes, the serious thought of which should make us sober and reserved in the use of them.

5. Let not your *Diversions* be too long and entrench upon your precious time; as for certain they do when so much of the day is allotted them that you are forced to crowd together in haste your

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*Devotions* and *Business*, that they may come within the compass of the little that is left; or perhaps, wholly neglect them. He is to be commended that knows when to leave off, who having stopped and breathed a while, and taken necessary refreshment, pursues his journey with fresh vigour and alacrity, and does not, as some others, make a tedious stay at every *baiting* Place. *Diversions* in life are not altogether unlike *Digressions* in a Book, things mighty serviceable to an *Author*, they relieve him in the want of matter, and, which is yet better, swell the bulk and the price of his Book; neither, if discreetly husbanded, are they unacceptable to the Reader; but if spun out to an unreasonable length, they take up much more room than the main subject; we conclude the *Author* to have a wrong idea of *Digressions*, or a very mean one of his *Readers*. The business of life, setting aside the time that runs off in convenient sleep and repose, ordinarily claims the biggest portion of the remainder; and in case your usual *Diversions* fill a larger space they are monstrous and unsizeable, as those overgrown *Digressions* mentioned before, Time is a most valuable talent, and the more valuable in that Eternity depends on it, and you had best think a little how you will be able to answer it at the last day, should you be prodigal of this treasure, and squander it away in *needleless Diversions*, *Diversions* that are loved not so much upon their own account (for their length is really tedious) as because they serve to pass away Time.

6. Let not your mind and heart be too far engaged in a *Diversion*. To hug a *Diversion* so close argues the affection to be prepossessed more than is becoming, and is an indication of a light and frothy

frothy soul. An infallible sign of this eager application to *Diversion* is refusing to leave it when some occasional *Business* summons you away ; and as this is a sign of a too intense pursuit of *Diversion* so is it evidently a reason against it ; for whatsoever tends not to make a *Diversion* preparatory to *Business*, but a let and a hindrance, must needs be an abuse of it, and inconsistent with the Laws of *Temperance* ; much as if I should use a Remedy for a Distemper, and take so great a Dose of it as to encrease my illness.

7. Look not on *Diversion* as an *End*, but use it as a *Means*. Let *Diversion* be for the sake of *Business*, not *Business* minister to *Diversion* ; which I fear is the common method of the world whose principal motive to work is either that they may get wherewith to supply their *Diversions*, or that by variety they may give a poignancy and relish to them, or be able to divert themselves without censure ; these are the views that animate them, and make business supportable, not the thought that they are now doing their *Duty*, obeying God, and serving their Generation. On the contrary, in their use of Recreation they look no further, they rest here as in their *End*, and the thing that chiefly inclines it is the slight superficial pleasure it gives, not its fitness to revive them, and beget a new appetite and capacity for *Business*, that so they may glorify God by a virtuous industry. Should they deny this, they will never be believed, as long as they envy Persons of *Quality* for the pleasurable life they lead, and account them the happiest People on earth because they can be continually diverting themselves, and not have such heavy reflections passed upon them, as they should for taking the  
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same Liberties. What can be a plainer argument than this, that they take *Diversion* to be the great End of Life? A notion that is confuted by the very name; for a *Diversion* is so called from its interrupting our principal concern; according to which etymology should we suppose it our great happiness to mind chiefly our *Diversions*, (where our circumstances allow of it) what we now term *Business* would most properly go under the name of *Diversion*.

It is not impossible that *Young Gentlemen* (if any such happen to read this small Essay) when they look on this, and some of the foregoing Particulars, will pass them over hastily, without making any application to themselves, fancying they are not the Persons concerned. The frequency and length of *Diversions*, and the not subordinating them to more manly and grave Occupations, may be a fault in those of *meaner Quality*, but in them they bespeak a *Freedom* and *Gallantry* of Spirit, and are a sort of *Rights* and *Immunities* belonging to their great Birth and Fortune. If they must make conscience how they spend their Time, what advantage have they above others? What is a great Estate good for but to maintain the Owner in a soft, idle and luxurious way of living? How else shall he distinguish himself from the trading part of the world? In earnest, this is such sorry reasoning that I am loath to suppose a man of any sense capable of it. *A Gentleman*, I hope, does not reckon himself above the Laws of right Reason and the Commands of the Gospel; he is equally a Subject of God Almighty, every whit as accountable for his actions; and his Time is a Talent it concerns him to improve, no less than

other men. Alas, Sirs, *Figure, Estate and Title* are poor empty things ; thus much you learn from the Example of our Lord who refused them all when in his Power. Because they dazle a vain unthinking crowd, is it imaginable they should weigh so much with the Great God, that he will exempt you from the common Duties of human nature ? Did our blessed Master lead a laborious and painful life ? And can any that are called his Disciples think it beneath them to set to any thing that hath but the face of *Business* ? To ask, How a Gentleman shall distinguish himself if not by his Pleasures ? is a scandalous Question ; and might with as good grace be altered into this other Question, How he shall be distinguished from other men but by being less *Reasonable* than they ? If he must be differenced from the rest of the world, there are much more creditable methods for it than this that is commonly taken. Let him affect to lead the way in brave and virtuous actions, and to excel in useful Learning, for which last he hath manifestly the advantage of persons whose circumstances are narrower ; such Accomplishments will brighten his Character, and because of the eminence of his station appear sooner, and dart their light and influence further than it is possible they should in a lower sphere. For a man to plead his Estate as his *Patent* for being careless and negligent, is such a piece of *Effrontery* that nothing can be more. Let the *Servant* he pays the greatest wages to, alledge that for a reason of his gading abroad, and doing less than his fellows ; what answer must he expect ? *Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.*

Hast thou so much of the world that thou dost not know of any use for it, unless it be to furnish

nish thy Pleasures? Let not this long disturb thee; thy wealth is not so unweildy, but there are enough who would willingly take off the parings of it; the Poor and the Needy are always with you. I would fain believe no *Young Gentleman*, to excuse his uselefs unprofitable manner of life, will pretend, he is at a loss how to imploy himself, that his time lies upon his hands, and he had as good give it all to Recreation, as consume it in doing nothing. Should any one talk at this rate, he must strangely forget himself; for where is the consequence, that because he would avoid doing nothing, he is forced upon doing that which is to no purpose?

The first Years of a *Gentleman's* Life (after his Reason begins to display itself) are usually spent at the Publick Schools, and there he cannot want for *Business* to take him up. Let him get into the acquaintance with the best Authors, and by them labour continually in cultivating his Mind and Manners, and he will find the fragments of time that remain over and above are not so very considerable. But, ah, how seldom is this done! Young Men that are born to Estates miserably neglect their Studies; as if Learning looked too pedantic in a *Gentleman*, or as if they should suck in enough of it by only breathing in the *College Air*; though I dare say they would never consent their dear Bodies should be put off with such thin diet. Hence proceeds an Ignorance that has been the Scandal of so many of our *Gentry*, and has made it wished they would never travel to give Foreigners so poor an idea of the Sense and Learning of the English Nation. And doubtless, this Ignorance is a principal reason of the corruption of the present age, more particularly of the

vices of the Tongue. *Gentlemen* would fain be remarkable for something, and despairing to pass for Men of sober and solid Sense, set up for *Men of Wit*, that is for Men that can make a Jest of *Damnation*; for in truth, he alone is thought a *Witty Man* that can say extravagant things, and treat his *Maker* with the same coarseness and freedom that he would his *Footman*. Yea, so fashionable is the profane humour grown, that (God forgive us) it is almost become a *Set Diversion*; a *Diversion* I confess I did not mention in discoursing of the *Choice of Diversions*, because so very bad that every one must see the evil of it; so very bad indeed that the Devil himself cannot invent a worse. In short, (that I may return from this little Digression) *Young Gentlemen* will find enough to do to lay in materials, that they may appear with honour and reputation when their *King* or *Country* shall call them into the Scene of Action.

8. Learn Humility from your *Diversions*. The want of them is not, in all likelihood, a necessity of *Original Nature*, but the effect of Sin. Innocent Man was not liable to that Stupor and Satiety we so often experience; his work, properly speaking, was not Labour but Pleasure; his strength could carry him on to his end without resting so often by the way; and whatever faintness and lassitude he might at times fall into, must I fancy, have been inconsiderable, and soon remedied by a short balsamic sleep. From hence it is, I am inclined to think, that part of the *Curse*, Gen. iii. 19. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread untill thou return to the ground*, was not only remote, and fell immediately upon the *Earth*, which being doomed to barrenness would

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put man to more expence and trouble to cultivate and improve it; but respected man immediately, and was as much as to say, that he should not only be obliged to bestow more care and labour upon the ground, but his work of that and all other kinds should be more painful and toilsome, and call for more frequent *Diversions*. But however this be, it is out of doubt that our *Diversions* are marks, if not of our *Apostasy*, at least of the *Imperfection* of the present state; for is it supposable that the *Spirits of Just Men made perfect* are as we presently oppressed by a contemplation, and for the sake of change can find their Pleasure in *Play Games*? You will say, they are at liberty from the load of *Flesh* and *Blood* that weighs us down. Very true; but how do you apprehend it will be at the Resurrection when the soul shall be again invested with its Body? Shall we then need to trifle some times that we may work at others? No certainly, the spriteliness and strength of both parts of our nature will fit us for continued exercise, and, being equal to the Angels, we shall not be subject to that weakness, and to those infirmities that belong to our present infant state.

Methinks therefore we cannot make a better nor more natural Use of our *Diversions* than to draw from them an argument for *Humility*. And if this be the true Use, assuredly they make a very wrong one of them, whose *Diversions* are a reason of their Pride; they despise the man that maintains himself by an honest industry, and hath not the ability or the inclination to melt down his hours in foolish pleasures. But what cannot Pride effect? It can build in the air, or upon that very ground that is sacred to Humility; and so great is the interest it has got in man, that he takes oc-

### 30      *The* REGULATION

casion to be proud from those things that are the effects of Sin and ought to humble him. *Nakedness*, as I may say, was the Livery of Innocence; Cloaths had not been known but by the *Fall*; and every time we dress ourselves it is strange almost how we can forbear reflecting by that very action, that we are *Apostate* Creatures: and yet what hath ministred more to vanity than cloaths? I have likewise shown you that the Necessity of Recreations was introduced by the *Fall*; for men therefore to insult because they divert themselves even more than is needful, betrays a strong inclination to Pride, and (abstracting from other considerations) renders the *Mosaic History* extremely probable, which acquaints us that our Nature was tainted with this sin in the fountain.

To add the greater force and efficacy to the *Directions* that have been given, consider the Advantages of *Regularity*. I glanced at several as I passed along, but it will not be amiss to consider more distinctly,

1. The agreeable appearance that it makes. Proportion is the very essence of beauty and harmony. The beauty of a Body lies in the strict symmetry of its parts, and a fine air and colour spread over the whole; and the beauty of Human Life consists in a due proportion and correspondence of the several parts with one another, and of all together with the Law of right Reason. Where the shrill and airy, and the more solemn Sounds do jointly assist to the harmony, the musick fails not to please a discerning ear; when the Lights and the Shades in a Picture are judiciously mingled, the eye confesses itself charmed at the sight; and who is there that is not agreeably surprized to see in a *Youthful Life* the brighter  
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and the graver Scenes orderly placed, and managed by an exact Prudence?

2. Reflect on the Credit that attends good management in *Diversions*. A Temperance that restrains from the grosser instances of sensual Pleasure is not without its praise in a *Young Man*, because the contrary is so very common in our times, and the fever of Youth does seem a little to excuse those extravagant Sallies; how reputable then must be a Temperance that descends even to the inspection and government of his *Recreations*? It shows his Reason to be staunch and firm, that there is a Principle within him superior to Sense and Fancy, which hath the mastery of his desires, and can be cool and sedate amidst warm and clamorous passions; it bespeaks present applause, and encourages great hopes and expectations of the future. The *Gentleman* that has preferred his private *Business* to his *Diversions* may with the greater confidence be entrusted with Publick Affairs by his *Prince* or *Country*, secure that he will not neglect them for his Pleasures. The *Scholar* that hath stuck close to his Studies will be reckoned well furnished and prepared for the employment he engages in. And the *Tradesman* who has minded his Shop will be thought to be master of his Trade; the world will judge him in a fair way to thrive, and so if he wants a Stock to begin with he shall have Credit enough almost to supply it. In a word all of them, with this *Proviso*, enter upon the world with peculiar Advantages.

3. The Pleasure of well regulated *Diversions* ought not to be forgotten. Whatever is reasonable will always carry with it its own Reward, for Reason is the proper Nature of man, his great distinctive

tinctive character ; and the more natural any thing the more pleasant. The temperate Person feels a more serene and genuine Pleasure both in the *Enjoyment* and in the *Reflection*. 1. Temperance gives the sincerest pleasure in the *Enjoyment* of *Diversions* ; of which there are these two or three obvious Reasons to be assigned.

1. Their not being too common, nor lengthened out too far, makes them the more relishing. It may be remarked of all the delights of this world that they pall upon a long fruition, and, if often repeated, grow flat and tasteless ; it is *Absence* must recommend the most ingenious Conversation ; and two of the best Friends that ever lived, after they have been shut up in a room for several hours, (unless they have something extraordinary to talk of) will, for the time, be heartily sick of one anothers company. On this very account I have sometimes wondered how so many People can bear a constant *Round* of long-winded *Diversions* ; it cannot be, sure, from the mighty Pleasure they find in them ; I am persuaded they enjoy less of that than other men. Monsieur *Pascal* will tell you the true ground of this ; “ In all the tumultuary Business, and in all the trifling Diversions amongst men, our general aim is to make the Time pass off our hands without feeling it, or rather without feeling ourselves ; and by getting rid of this small portion of Life, to avoid that inward disgust and bitterness which we should not fail to meet with, did we find the leisure to descend into our own breasts.”

2. The temperate man enjoys all the pleasure a *Diversion* will naturally afford, because he does not look for more ; whereas disappointment is the certain Fate of very positive Desires, and fruition

gives



gives but little satisfaction, in regard fancy had promised too much; the man is disgusted to find all his gay hopes so rudely treated, and himself the *Cully* of his *Imagination*. It is advantageous for an object when expectation falls short of it, nor is any one displeased to be so mistaken, because the error contributes to his happiness; but when expectation flies too high it is a mortification to descend again, as it would be for a guest that had seated himself at the upper end of the Table to be thrust down amongst the meanest of the Company.

3. Temperance is the reason that a person diverts himself with an easy satisfied mind. Having paid what he owes to his more important concerns, his thoughts within are at rest, he may now venture upon a little harmless pleasure, and has the leave of God and his conscience for it. Not so he whose *Diversions* jostle out the *main Affairs* of Life; being sent into the world not that he might follow the conduct of *Humour* and *Fancy*, but to serve his Maker and be useful to mankind; he must needs be uneasy for having acted beneath the dignity of his Nature, and the design of his Creation; his conscience will be apt to tell him he hath no right to *Diversions*; it will upbraid him for having stolen so much time from his *Business*, and be continually duning him for the long arrears that are due. And thus, the Pleasure the first takes in a *Diversion* drinks pure and refined, like a liquor drawn off from its lees; that of the other is extremely puddled, as liquor when the vessel hath received a great shake, and the dregs at bottom are disturbed and unsettled. To conclude.

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2. If the regular Person has the better in the *Enjoyment of Diversions*, much more in the *Reflection*. Memory is not a torment to him as it is to some others who have reason to blush every time they cast their view backward, not seeing any but empty space void of all substantial actions, nor having advanced in the knowledge of God, of the world, or of themselves; to whom no standing memorial is left that a Rational Being hath lived, but only a few Ideas silly and impertinent as the images of a Dream.

In short, if a life possessed intirely by *Diversions* be pleasing to think on, it must be when it is yet future, not when it is past. On the contrary, Time well spent yields greater satisfaction in the reflection than it does in the prospect; by being past it is secured to a person, and no accident whatever can alter it, whereas there is something of Contingency while it is to come, and many Temptations may turn him from his Duty; besides, he reaps the fruits of his good husbandry, he finds his very Being bettered and improved, and more valuable than it was; to which add, that his chearful labours and his inocent mirth encourage him to hope for the happiness of a better life.

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